



SEVENTH EDITION

# ARIZONA MINORITY STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT 2018

WHEN THE MINORITY  
BECOMES THE MAJORITY

HISPANIC

WHITE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BLACK

AMERICAN INDIAN

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER

ARIZONA MINORITY EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS CENTER

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## INTRODUCTION

The Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC) is a part of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education. AMEPAC's mission is to stimulate improvement of academic outcomes for minority students throughout the state of Arizona by conducting rigorous research. Our goal is that all Arizona students will be able to succeed academically.

AMEPAC is proud to provide policymakers, educators, and the public with this 7th edition of the Minority Student Progress Report. The report provides an overview of how Arizona students fare on a variety of academic indicators from P-12 through postsecondary education. Although this report focuses largely on disparities in student achievement based on students' minority status, we recognize that the term "minority" may no longer be accurate. Minority students have become the largest demographic group in Arizona's P-12 public education system and their representation continues to grow. This shift in the diversity of our state's student population is substantial and suggests that the Arizona of the near future will look very different from the Arizona of today. As minority students become adults, Arizona's economic well-being will rest on the quality of the education that they receive and their ability to be successful in college or a career.

While the data in this report suggest that some gains have been made, minority students continue to underperform relative to their White peers on nearly every academic indicator from P-12 through postsecondary education. If these disparities persist, the future of Arizona may be at risk. Fortunately, this report comes at the right time - education is at the forefront of public awareness.

The *2018 Arizona Minority Student Progress Report* can serve as a starting point for conversations and reforms that ensure Arizona is on track towards a bright and prosperous future for all.

### REPORT OVERVIEW

This 7th edition of the report is divided into four major sections.

**Section 1 – Demographics:** This section provides a brief overview of how the Arizona student population is changing. The demographic data are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Section 2 – P-12 Education:** The second section includes summaries of key educational indicators such as academic achievement, dropout rates, and enrollment in special education. The data are reported by the Arizona Department of Education.

**Section 3 – College Readiness:** This section describes the extent to which Arizona students are "college ready." The data are from the Arizona Board of Regents, the College Board, ACT, inc., and Arizona's community college districts.

**Section 4 – Postsecondary Enrollment and Completion:** The final section examines postsecondary enrollment and completion at Arizona's postsecondary institutions. These data are from the United States Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the Arizona Board of Regents.

READING THE REPORT

To aid readers, the graphs and figures presented in this report use a common color scheme for the reporting of race/ethnicity (see “Race/Ethnicity Category Codes”).

Reporting race and ethnicity data can be challenging since reporting conventions have changed over time and not all data sources use the same conventions.

In an effort to standardize terms throughout this report, we drew from the guidelines established by the White House Office of Budget and Management prior to 1997. In general, we use the following race/ethnicity categories: American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, White, Hispanic, and Multiracial.

In a few instances, categories were not reported in a data source or were not available in all years. When this was the case, these categories were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, some data sources reported “Asian” and “Pacific Islander” separately and in such a way that they could not be combined. In these instances, we reported these categories separately.

Finally, we acknowledge that Hispanic individuals may be of any race. However, many of the data sources used in this report refer to “Hispanic” as a unique racial/ethnic category. When separate race and ethnicity data were available for Hispanics, we treated “Hispanic” as a unique racial/ethnic category to maintain consistency throughout the report.

There are many ways in which individuals may choose to identify their racial or ethnic heritage, and the decision to use these terms is not meant to reflect any ideological or political preference. This report relies completely on data provided from institutions, and as such is limited to the reporting categories they use.

RACE / ETHNICITY CATEGORY CODES

AI	AMERICAN INDIAN
AP	ASIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER
B	BLACK
W	WHITE
H	HISPANIC
UK	UNKNOWN RACE
M	MULTIRACIAL





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

In the previous version of this report, we highlighted disparities in educational achievement and attainment across a variety of important indicators and showed that these disparities have existed for some time.

The findings described in the current report suggest that despite some modest improvements, these gaps remain. The following is a summary of our main findings.

### ARIZONA DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▶ Compared to the U.S. population, Arizona's population is comprised of greater percentages of Hispanics and American Indians. Additionally, Arizona has a large and growing population of Hispanic youth which suggests that the demographic composition of the state will change significantly in future years. For instance, while Hispanics comprised only 26 percent of 45- to 54-year-olds in 2015, they comprised 42 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds.
- ▶ Overall, 27 percent of Arizonans who were 25 or older had earned a bachelor's degree or higher in 2015. Compared to the state, lower percentages of Hispanics (11%) and American Indians (10%) earned a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ▶ In 2015, 18 percent of Arizonans lived below the poverty line. Poverty rates were highest among American Indian (38%), Hispanic (28%), and Black residents (24%).

### P-12 EDUCATION

- ▶ In 2004, minority (i.e. non-White) students became the majority of all students in Arizona public schools. This trend has continued in recent years with Hispanic students comprising the largest group of students (45%) in 2015.
- ▶ The percentage of public school students enrolled in charter schools increased from 12 percent in 2010 to 16 percent in 2015. Compared to the statewide student population, charter schools enrolled higher percentages of Asian and White students and lower percentages of Hispanic and American Indian students.
- ▶ The percentage of students who drop out of school in a given year has remained fairly stable between 2009 and 2015 (i.e. roughly 3%). American Indian students had the highest dropout rates of any racial/ethnic group (i.e. roughly 7%). Hispanic and Black students dropped out at lower rates than American Indian students, but at higher rates than White and Asian Pacific Islander students.
- ▶ Among the class of 2015, over three-quarters of Arizona students graduated within four years of entering high school. Asian and White students had the highest high school graduation rates.
- ▶ The total number of English Language Learners has decreased in recent years. However, this may have been due, in part, to classification criteria that overestimated students' proficiency in English.

- The total number of special education students has increased by 3 percent between 2010 and 2015. Within each racial/ethnic group, American Indian and Black students received special education services at the highest rates (i.e. approximately 15% and 13%, respectively).
- The total number of students receiving free- and reduced-price lunch increased by 11 percent between 2010 and 2015. Within each racial/ethnic group, Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students received free- and reduced-price lunch at the highest rates (66%, 59%, and 59%, respectively) in 2015.
- The number of students passing AzMERIT and AIMS Science increased by between 1 and 5 percentage points in most grades/subjects between 2015 and 2016.
- Broken down by race/ethnicity, the number of students passing AzMERIT and AIMS Science in 2016 increased by between 1 and 4 percentage points for nearly all racial/ethnic groups compared to the previous year. On all tests, Asian and White students passed at the highest rates.

## COLLEGE ACCESS

- In 2014, just under half of Arizona's high school graduates met the eligibility requirements for admission to one of the state's public universities. In general, Hispanic, American Indian, and Black students met university eligibility requirements at lower rates than their White and Asian peers.
- The number of Arizona students taking the SAT has declined in recent years. Compared to the overall high school-aged population, SAT test takers were disproportionately White while Hispanic students were underrepresented. In general, Asian and White students had higher average scores than their Hispanic, American Indian, and Black peers.
- The number of students taking the ACT has increased in recent years. The demographic composition of ACT test-takers reflected the overall high school-aged population in 2016. This may be due to recent initiatives aimed at increasing the number of minority students who take the ACT. In general, Asian and White students had higher average scores than their Hispanic, American Indian, and Black peers.
- In 2016, the largest percentage of advanced placement exams were taken by White and Hispanic students. White, Multiracial, and Asian students passed Advanced Placement tests at higher rates than Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students.

- Statewide, 77 percent of dual enrollments were in academic courses while 23 percent were in vocational courses. In the Maricopa County Community College District, 89 percent of dual enrollments were in academic courses and 11 percent were in vocational courses. For all other community college districts in the state, enrollments were equally split between academic and vocational courses.

## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

- In 2015, Arizona postsecondary institutions enrolled 651,790 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. These included online, in-state, and out-of-state students. Just under half of these students were enrolled in private, for-profit four-year institutions while a third were enrolled in public, two-year institutions.
- 44 percent of all students enrolled in Arizona postsecondary institutions received instruction exclusively through online learning or distance education.
- 53 percent of Arizona high school graduates in 2016 enrolled in some form of postsecondary education during the following fall. Asian, White, and Multiracial students enrolled in postsecondary education at the highest rates (72%, 58%, and 54%, respectively). Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students enrolled in two-year institutions more frequently than in four-year institutions.
- The number of community college students who successfully transferred to a state university has decreased in recent years. However, the most recent data suggest that this trend may be reversing with 17 percent of students from the 2012 cohort transferring after three years compared to 15 percent of students from the 2011 cohort.
- The racial/ethnic composition of both graduate and undergraduate students at Arizona's postsecondary institutions has become more diverse in recent years. Although the racial/ethnic composition of students has come closer to reflecting the demographics of the state, minority students continue to be underrepresented in most kinds of postsecondary institutions.
- Of all Arizona high school graduates in 2010, 21 percent had earned a four-year degree by 2016.

# 2018 Policy Recommendations

## PREK-12 EDUCATION

**Identify and implement strategies that encourage all students, including minority students, to graduate from high school.**

- Continue to develop, integrate, and require an individual Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) so students and families have a roadmap to success.
- Ensure that schools and educators are well equipped to address and develop partnerships with families to engage parents effectively and consistently. This exchange will assist parents in navigating educational systems, advocating and supporting their children, and have a clear understanding of higher education benefits and processes.

**Ensure that English Language Learner (ELL) students receive the appropriate services to improve student achievement.**

- Ensure that the Arizona Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) assesses academic English proficiency and determines Fluent English Proficient (FEP) status, exiting students from ELL services.
- Monitor Fluent English Proficient (FEP) students for two years post exit from ELL services, ensuring that appropriate academic progress is maintained.
- Explore and promote alternative approaches to the four-hour block immersion method.
- Increase language requirements for teachers in the form of mandatory English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsements.

**Ensure equity for all students by providing academic support and social services necessary for educational success.**

- Help teachers and staff embrace racial, ethnic, linguistic, academic and cultural diversity by promoting cross-cultural proficiency.
- Develop community partnerships to deliver needed social services to children in poverty.

**Ensure every student achieves a high school diploma and graduates from high school college and career ready.**

- Provide adequate time and resources to allow every student to achieve the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.
- Expose students to career pathways and provide the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their goals through real-life experiences. Examples include job shadowing, business partnerships, mentoring, and classroom presentations with clear linkages to classroom instruction

## COLLEGE ACCESS

**Increase the number of high school graduates who are eligible for university admission.**

- Provide guidance, knowledge and appropriate coursework to ensure successful admission to a postsecondary institution.

**Improve both the percentage of and success rate of students taking the SAT and ACT.**

- Implement a strategy to increase the success of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch that includes free or low-cost test prep classes.

## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

**Support community colleges in their roles as the first point of enrollment in the postsecondary system for students from low-income families. Recognize that community colleges are serving the greatest proportion of students from low-income families and provide the support needed to allow these students to be successful.**

- Provide state funding for all community colleges in Arizona.

**Develop, support, and promote education pathways as roadmaps for college/university completion.**

- Support the development of education pathways that increase student retention and college graduation, and prepare students to set and attain their varied postsecondary education goals.
- Expand promising pathway programs to include and impact many more students. Research shows that students on academic plans save time, save money, and stay on task.

**Engage families and students earlier about higher education processes, programs, and opportunities.**

- Reach out to families early and often and connect them with higher education opportunities, resources, and key college contacts.

- Promote early college programs, including dual enrollment, to families.

- Extend outreach avenues to include community events, organizations, faith-based groups, social media, etc.

**Increase the number of students who qualify for credit-bearing courses.**

- Support counselors and advisors in promoting the importance of student testing preparation for a nationally recognized college-readiness examination.
- Establish parent engagement programs to explain the importance of short-term and long-term benefits of students enrolling in credit-bearing courses.



## CONCLUSION

In the 2012 report from Morrison Institute, *Five Shoes Waiting to Drop*, it stated that “Arizona is at risk of becoming a second-tier state, educationally and economically.” We noted then, that our student population was changing, becoming a minority majority in the early grades. In the 2016 *Minority Student Progress Report*, we noted that our student population was continuing that transformation and urged that we collaborate with others and work to close the achievement gap.

In this, the 2018 *Minority Student Progress Report - When the Minority Becomes the Majority*, we confirm that Arizona schools have become a majority-minority student population, with great implications for Arizona’s future.

## POVERTY

We know that poverty matters for students’ overall well-being and this affects their ability to succeed academically.

Between 2010 and 2015, the number of students receiving free- or reduced-price lunch in Arizona increased by 11% from 482,197 to 532,725. Over 66 percent of Hispanic students in Arizona received free- or reduced-price lunch in 2015, followed by American Indian students (60%), Black students (59%), Multiracial students (39%), White students (26%), and Asian Pacific Islander students (24%).

## EQUITY

Federal and state education reforms have a tendency to focus on “good schools and teachers” as the sole solution to the achievement gap. This approach leads to the labeling of “failing schools” with little regard to the socio/economic conditions that impact children in poverty and the communities in which they reside.

Equity in education for all students requires a much broader focus on the environmental, social, economic, and cultural factors that impact student achievement - and education policies that take into consideration these factors.

While the achievement gap continues to exist, the data does contain some good news – evidence of collaboration and hard work. We found that:

- Graduation rates have remained stable in recent years and exceed pre-2011 levels.
- The percentage of students passing the AzMERIT mathematics and English language arts tests has increased for all racial groups.
- The percentage of community college students successfully transferring to state universities shows signs of increasing.
- The racial/ethnic composition of graduate and undergraduate students in Arizona’s postsecondary institutions is becoming more diverse.

## DEVELOPMENTAL/REMEDIAL

Education is a topic of great importance to the future success of the Arizona Postsecondary Education system and its thousands of students. As clearly illustrated in this report, the system must educate greater numbers of increasingly diverse students entering the system to achieve wide-ranging goals.

In Arizona, as in many other states, the majority of first time students entering the community colleges are under-prepared to take on college-level work. This is due to policies and agreements between the public universities and the community colleges in the past which place this challenge squarely on the shoulders of the community colleges. The goal is clear. Underprepared students must be quickly brought up to college-level capability, yet, the path to success is still being studied.

At the recommendation of the authors of the 2016 report, Dr. Jeffrey Milem and his team, AMEPAC has commissioned a singular focused research paper that will review data from institutions, state reports, the community colleges, the statewide strategic plan, summarize promising practices, and suggest policy recommendations to support student success. This paper will be released in 2018 and will present an in-depth investigation into the current status of Developmental/Remedial education in the state and provide a more complete understanding of the necessary steps to achieve student success.

## FUNDING

If Arizona is serious about moving forward on Achieve 60 AZ, an ambitious goal to ensure 60 percent of Arizonans have a certificate or college degree by 2030, it will be imperative that we support these students, collaborate and provide the resources, beginning with adequate funding.

None of the strategies suggested in our recommendations can be achieved without an effective, well-compensated teacher in place for every student. To that end, the AMEPAC recommendation would support and echo the recommendations from the 110th Arizona Town Hall, funding P-12 education to:

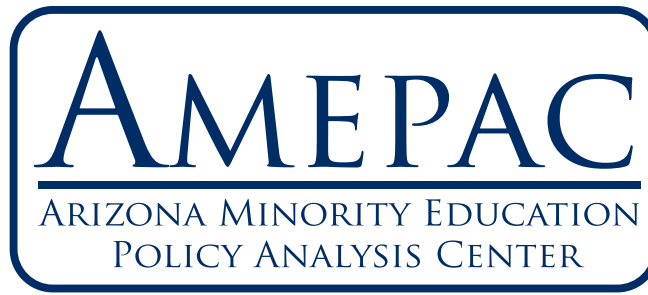
***Provide adequate and proper resources to fully support P-12 education in Arizona, but find a new, dedicated, sustainable funding source. Additionally, develop strategies and provide resources to retain teachers in Arizona.***

- *Increase teacher pay to a level that is, at minimum, comparable to other states.*
- *Develop policies that serve as a means to attract teachers, rather than as a deterrent.*
- *Distribute funds to pay teachers in a manner that is fair and not divisive, and allow local governance to determine how funds are best distributed.*

No single organization can work alone. We encourage the use of this data as a basis for advocacy. Success in closing the achievement gap for our minority students and students in poverty is the only way to put us on a path to prosperity – for Arizonans and for our state’s future workforce.







## ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

**Robert Vagi** is a research associate at the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota. His research spans a variety of topics and has been featured in several academic and popular media outlets including PBS's *Horizon*, *The Arizona Republic* and the Brookings Institution's *Brown Center Chalkboard*. Prior to earning a Ph.D. in Educational Policy and Evaluation at Arizona State University, Robert spent six years as a public school teacher in Phoenix, Arizona.

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**Lydia Ross** is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Policy and Evaluation program in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on access, equity, and inclusion in higher education. Her dissertation is focused on admissions practices of higher education institutions and perceptions of these policies and practices among students.

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***Pease visit [www.highered.az.gov/amepac](http://www.highered.az.gov/amepac) for additional data, including:***

- **FULL REPORT**

An electronic copy of the 2018 Arizona Minority Student Progress Report

- **COUNTY ADDENDUM**

An electronic copy of additional information and data for Arizona's 14 counties

- **APPENDICES**

Tables for data used in the 113 figures and charts in the 2018 report

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